



Mr. *Cummings's*

ELECTION SERMON

May 28, 1783.



THE

MR. CUNNING'S

LECTION

THE

A
S E R M O N
PREACHED BEFORE HIS HONOR
THOMAS CUSHING, Esq;
LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR,
THE HONORABLE THE
COUNCIL,
AND THE TWO BRANCHES OF THE
GENERAL COURT
OF THE
COMMONWEALTH
OF
MASSACHUSETTS
MAY 28, 1783.
BEING THE ANNIVERSARY OF
GENERAL ELECTION.

BY HENRY CUMINGS, A. M.

Pastor of the Church in BILLERICA.

B O S T O N :
PRINTED BY T. & J. FLEET, 1783.

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

IN SENATE, May 29, 1783.

ORDERED, That *Jeremiah Powell*,
Moses Gill, and *Ebenezer Bridge*,
Esquires, be a Committee to wait on
the Rev. Mr. *Henry Cumings*, and
return him the Thanks of this Board
for the Sermon delivered by him,
Yesterday, before his Honor, the Lieu-
tenant-Governor; the Council, and
the two Branches of the General
Court; and to request a Copy of the
same for the Press.

S. ADAMS, President.

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AN

Election SERMON.

I PETER V. 5.

Yea, all of you be subject to one another.

WITHOUT enquiring into the particular meaning of these words, considered in a sense restrained by their coherence with what preceeds and follows, I shall take them as an independent sentence ; in which detached view, they comprehend all those duties of civil and social life, which mankind owe to one another, whatever difference there may be among them, as to their respective capacities and outward condition in the world.

As men are formed for society, and cannot be happy in a state of separation from
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one another ; so their well-being depends upon mutual assistance and support, and a reciprocal interchange of those offices of friendship and benevolence, which their mutual dependence requires, and both reason and religion prescribe.

That all men ought in some sense to be *subject to one another*, is the plain doctrine of the apostle Peter, in the words just read. This doctrine concerns all societies, under every form and constitution of government, whether monarchical, popular or mixed. It is especially suited to the genius of a commonwealth, founded upon this leading principle, that "all men are born free and equal ;" that is, come into the world on even ground in regard to authority ; no one having a right to govern, in virtue of primogeniture, or descent from an higher and more noble parentage than others.

The subject therefore is worthy of the attention of this respectable auditory ; and the speaker has no doubt but they will afford him their candid indulgence, while he modestly attempts to offer a few thoughts upon it, though he should not be able to handle it, in a manner answerable to it's dignity and importance.

According

According to it's most common use, the word *subjection* signifies the submission of an inferior to a superior, and applies only to those duties, which men owe to those, who have authority over them. In order therefore to accommodate the doctrine of mutual subjection, to all the members of a community, we must sometimes depart from the strict sense of this word, or vary the meaning of it, so as to make it consist with the differences between men, in regard to their several abilities ; and with those distinctions of office, rank and authority, which are necessary in society.

It is evident that the duties, which men owe to one another, and to society, are not, in all cases, precisely the same ; but must be different, according to the difference of their respective advantages, opportunities and other circumstances. And when any one fulfils the obligations resulting from his particular condition and station in life ; or that arise from the particular sphere of action, whether high or low, in which he moves ; he does, on his part, conform to the great law of mutual subjection, and render himself a good and useful member of society.

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Every one ought to consider, that he was born, not for himself alone, but for others, for society, for his country; and consequently that he is indispensibly obliged to render the best assistance and service in his power, to his fellow-citizens around him, and to contribute his share towards the general interest of the community to which he belongs. This obligation is not confined to a few; but extends to all, from the highest officer in the state, through all subordinate ranks, and inferior orders and degrees, down to the lowest peasant and plebeian. For though all are not able to render themselves useful and beneficial, in the same respects; yet there is no one, who enjoys the powers of reason and health, in any tolerable degree, but may, by a suitable employment of his faculties and abilities, not only serve himself, but the public, and make himself a blessing, in some respect or other.

There is a resemblance between the natural body and the body politic. The natural body is composed of many members; none of which are useless; but all calculated to answer some valuable purpose, and subserve the good of the whole. What therefore the apostle Paul says of the natural body
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with a view to illustrate the union, which ought to subsist between the members of the christian church, is equally applicable to civil societies. *The body, says he, is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.—The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.—God hath so tempered the body together,—that there should be no schism in it; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. So that the union and connection between the several parts of the natural body, and their necessary dependance one on another, is an apt illustration of the great law of mutual subjection in civil*

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societies ;

societies ; the members whercof, whether rich or poor, in high life or low, in office or out of it, stand in need of mutual assistance and support ; without which it will be impossible to promote the common interest, or to preserve the peace and harmony of the whole.

A man's being raised above others in wealth or office, does not render him independent on those who are beneath him, in these respects. He cannot say, he has no need of those, who are in a lower condition and meaner circumstances ; for, without their aid and service, he would lose the advantage of his elevation ; and, like Samson, shorn of his locks, become weak like other men.

The mechanic and tiller of the ground are as necessary in society as the legislator, civil magistrate, or any other profession. The labours of the poor and services of the lower classes of people, in their several callings and occupations, are of as great importance to the general welfare of a state, as the counsel of the wise, the bounty of the rich, and protection of the powerful. If therefore any one, capable of attending to the common business of life, is an unprofitable

profitable and useless member of the community, it is not owing to any necessity arising from his outward condition in the world, but to some faulty cause.

Whoever, suppressing a regard for the good of others, confines himself to the narrow circle of his own private interest, does thereby render himself, at best, a nuisance to society. Such an one can have no just claim to honour and respect, let his station in life be what it will. It is not the external splendor of their circumstances, but a constant endeavour to be good, and to do good, according to their abilities, that makes men truly great and honourable. In the sight of God, who *respecteth not persons*, but in judging of men regards only the moral differences between them, no outward condition is more honourable than another. The true criterion of real worth is a man's conduct, in that station or post in life, whether conspicuous or obscure, which providence has allotted to him.

It is the business of civil rulers, who are intrusted with the high powers of government, to enact and take care for the effectual execution of such laws, as shall be best calculated to restrain the exorbitancy of the human

human passions, to guard individuals against insults and outrages, and secure every one in the peaceable enjoyment of liberty, property, and all the blessings of society. And while they employ their authority and power, in pursuit of these great ends of their promotion, it is the duty and interest of people at large, to yield a chearful obedience to them, and a ready compliance with those rules, regulations and laws, which are made and provided, for the benefit of each particular member, in harmony with the prosperity and welfare of the whole collective body.

The grand end of social union and of the institution of civil government, is the good of the whole, and of every individual in consistence therewith. This end may be frustrated, not only by an abuse of power in rulers; but also by an abuse of liberty in the people. Power abused ceases to be lawful authority, and degenerates into tyranny. Liberty abused, or carried to excess, is licentiousness. Neither of these can consist with the good of society. The former, unresisted, will introduce slavery, and ignominious servitude, among the lower ranks and orders of people. The latter is a prolific source of disorder and anarchy.

When

When rulers take the advantage of the powers they are vested with, to oppress their subjects and rob people of their just rights, in order to enrich and aggrandize themselves, they counteract the very end of their advancement, and instead of being *ministers of God for good*, become rods of his school for correction (not to say, ministers of the devil for mischief.) And when people, under pretence of liberty, refuse obedience to lawful authority, and oppose the measures of just government, meerly because such measures do not coincide with their private views and separate interests, the principles on which they act, are evidently inconsistent with a state of society, and lead directly back to a state of nature. For where such an excess of liberty is claimed and allowed, as leaves it optional with every individual to obey or disobey the civil authority, according as he shall judge it to be for or against his particular interest, a state of society cannot differ much from a state of nature.

If every man, without compulsion, would strictly conform to the obligations of natural law, there would be no occasion for forming any social connections, or uniting under any forms of civil government. But such
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is evidently the state of human nature ; such the disorder of the human passions ; such the power of envy, prejudice and a lust of domination ; such the force of evil byasses, proceeding from ignorance, contracted views and competitions of interest ; that without the introduction of social compact and civil authority, mankind could have no dependence upon mutual help and assistance, nor any security against abuses and injuries, violence and rapine.

It being necessary for men to unite in society, and establish civil government, in order effectually to avail themselves of the advantages of mutual succour, defence and protection ; without which, their enjoyments would be few and precarious, and their inconveniences and dangers great and distressing : this being the case, every one, who has just conceptions of things (far from claiming a liberty to do whatever his ambition, avarice or partiality to himself might dictate to be right) must feel himself obliged to consult the general welfare, by conforming to the laws of society, constitutionally made by public authority, for the good of the whole ; though such laws should sometimes interfere with his private views, and contradict his prejudices.

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The public good is the attracting point, the common centre of gravity, which should confine, regulate and govern the motions of all the members of society. When any fly off from this point and take an excentric course, the coercion of law should be used, to check their irregular motions, and reduce them back to their proper centre, in order that the œconomy and beauty of the politic system may be preserved, and the bands of society remain unbroken.

That a due subordination may be kept up between the several parts of the politic body; and all the members thereof be made to conspire, in the exercise of their respective functions, to the health and happiness of the whole; effectual care should be taken to prevent government from falling into contempt. To honour those, who are intrusted with the powers of government, is one thing, evidently necessary for this end. This therefore is a duty which we owe to society. And that people may have no excuse for not doing their duty, in this respect, it concerns all civil officers, especially those in high rank and authority, to maintain their dignity, by a decent gravity of deportment, an inflexible adherence to the rules of justice and equity, and a steady application

application to the business of their exalted stations. Such a conduct, in rulers, has a powerful tendency to attract esteem, and command respect and veneration. But tho' they should justly merit the highest honours, by a worthy behaviour, and a zealous uniform pursuit of the great ends of their promotion, it would not be at all strange, to find some few, disposed to withhold from them due respect and submission. For there always have been, and probably always will be, some in the world, who under the baneful influence of those levelling principles, that cannot brook any civil distinctions and restraints, *despise government, and speak evil of dignities.* Persons of this description are dangerous members of society, as their principles and practices are subversive of all civil authority, and tend directly to plunge civil government into an universal wrack of ruin.

It deserves to be remembred, that we honour society, when we honour those, who are cloathed with lawful authority. For as all lawful authority in rulers, is derived from the people, through the medium of that constitutional compact, which binds them together in one body ; so to treat the rulers of a people, with respect and honour, suitable

suitable to their public characters, and the offices which they sustain, is a proper expression of that reverence, which individuals owe to the community, as a body. I may add, that as the respect shewn to those, who are in public stations, redounds to the public; so it also tends to make a people appear respectable, and to give to government the energy, necessary for attaining the ends of it. On the contrary, to withhold respect from those, who have been constitutionally promoted to offices of authority and power, is to cast a slight and contempt on the whole body of the people, and tends to make a society appear mean and despicable, to relax the reins of government and undermine the very foundations of it.

It is reasonable indeed for a people to keep a jealous eye upon those, who are entrusted with power, in the several departments of government. This is necessary to keep them on their guard, against all encroachments on their liberties, and to preserve them in a readiness to resist the first approaches of despotism. But suspicions may be carried too far. When upon insufficient grounds, they are indulged to such a degree, as to destroy all confidence in civil rulers, and encourage the impatience of people under

the restraints of law, they are of dangerous consequence ; as they plant the seeds of faction, a convulsive disease, that threatens the dissolution of the body politic. When faction enters a state, with its usual train of virulence, malevolence and abusive invective, it unstrings the nerves of government, and introduces such disorder and uncertainty into public measures, and such strife and division among people, as are inconsistent with the public safety, security and prosperity. This distemper is generally the offspring of envy and disappointed ambition. Avarice always stands ready to foster and nurse, to increase and inflame it, by groundless criminations of men and measures ; especially when the public exigences require heavy taxes, and expensive exertions.

The inconveniences and mischiefs, that must accrue to society, from this, and every other gross violation of the law of mutual subjection, are sufficient to convince any one of the necessity of a strict adherence to it. Our obligation to avoid divisive principles and practices, and by a constant intercourse of mutual good offices, to endeavour to make ourselves beneficial to one another, and serviceable to society, is therefore a plain dictate of reason and common sense. I would

would add (if any desire further satisfaction) that this obligation is enforced upon us, in the sacred scriptures, by the authority of the supreme Legislator and Governor of the world. The words at the head of this discourse are the words of an apostle, under the inspiration of God. Another inspired apostle expresses himself to the same purpose, in these words, *Let no man seek his own ; but every man another's wealth.—Look not every man on his own things ; but every man also on the things of others.* The meaning of which is, that men ought not to confine their views to their own private interest, but to extend their regards to the welfare of others, and exercise a benevolent concern and care for the good of their fellow-creatures.

This also is a doctrine expressly taught by the great author of our holy religion, when he commands us to *love our neighbour as ourselves* ; and enjoins upon us that comprehensive rule of equity and charity, *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*

It may not be improper to observe here, that the christian religion recommends itself to the embraces of every lover of mankind,
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by its being the most benevolent institution in the world, admirably calculated, by its doctrines, precepts and sanctions, to promote *peace on earth, and good will among men.* And whoever duly considers the nature of christianity, and attends to its adaptedness to suppress the corrupt lusts, and restrain the irregular passions of men; to fill the mind with noble sentiments of piety and benevolence, and engage people in pursuits, suitable to the dignity, and conducive to the happiness of their reasonable natures; cannot doubt, but (other things being alike) he, who has imbibed the spirit and principles of this religion, will make a better magistrate, a better legislator, a better judge, and in short, fill every office and department in government, with more honour to himself and advantage to the public; and, in private life, make a better subject and a better citizen; than one who has formed his views and sentiments, upon any other system of religion and morals.

It has indeed been objected, as an essential defect in christianity, by some not well affected to it, that it no where particularly recommends the noble virtue of patriotism. But (not to insist on any thing else) it is sufficient to reply to this objection, that
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whatever there is excellent and laudable in patriotism, is included in that generous and diffusive benevolence, which is the animating soul of this religion. Virtuous patriotism, far from implying any ill-will to the rest of mankind, is nothing else, but the principle of universal benevolence, exercised as far as a man's power extends, upon the objects that claim his first regards. For as no one has ability to carry his good will to all men into effect; so reason will teach every one, that his first obligation is to those, with whom he is more immediately connected, and where providence has assigned him his station and sphere of usefulness. Should a man suppress a particular affection for the society, with which he is most closely united, and neglect the interest of his own country under pretence of exercising equal benevolence towards all mankind, it would be the same thing, in effect as to resolve to be useless, and neglect the good of all. For there is no other way, in which any one can render himself serviceable to those parts of the great community of mankind, with which he has no special connection, than by the exercise of an hearty zeal for the welfare of his own country, and endeavouring, in the most effectual manner, to promote the good of that society, which bounds

bounds the sphere of his influence and power. In this sense, and in this way, all men, in all the distinct states and kingdoms of the world, may and ought to be *subject to one another*. It is thus only that we can fulfil our obligations to all mankind.

• True it is, patriotism is but a blind affection, and essentially defective as to any virtuous excellence, if it prompts a man to defend the cause of his country, when his country forms itself into a faction against the rights of mankind, and is wickedly endeavouring to bring other states and nations under its arbitrary jurisdiction and government. No one, who will consult the sober dictates of reason, can suppose himself obliged to espouse such an unrighteous cause, or freely to afford any support to his country, in the prosecution of such an evil design. The principle of benevolence to all, clearly forbids this. But the same principle obliges the members of every community, to a zealous exertion, in defence of their rights, laws and liberties, when the same are endangered by the unrighteous claims, and violent proceedings of ambitious enemies. In such a case, defensive war is a duty, founded not barely on the principles of self-preservation and patriotism, but
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also on the principle of unconfined universal benevolence; it being evidently for the interest of all mankind, that in all parts of the world, those should be opposed, to the last extremity, who are endeavouring to advance themselves upon the ruins of the essential rights of human nature.

The man, who makes the happiness and prosperity of his country, a grand object of his zealous pursuit, and generously risks his life and fortune, when the case requires it, in the defence of it's constitution and laws, is a character worthy of universal esteem and honour. Such an one, so far as his abilities extend, exercises friendship to all men. What then shall we say of those who, when the rights and liberties of their country, are in danger of falling a prey to the aspiring ambition of proud invaders, who have waged an unjust war against it, stand aloof, and not only refuse to assist in saving it from ruin, but desert it, and, of free choice, join the standard of the enemy? Can such persons make good their pretensions, I will not say to patriotism, but to general benevolence? Whatever be their motives, are they not to be viewed as enemies, if actions have any meaning? And should their country, which they have thus neglected

neglected, and abandoned to its fate in a time of trouble and danger, be successful in its endeavours to maintain its cause, and defeat the designs of its enemies, must not their admission afterwards to the freedom and privileges of it, be an act of meer favour and special grace, to which they can lay no equitable claim ?*

Christianity indeed obliges us *to love and forgive our enemies*, and do good to those who treat us ill. But this obligation does not extend so far, as to exclude a regard to our own safety and defence. It would be unreasonable to suppose, that our good-will to enemies, ought to supercede our obligations to ourselves and to our country ; or that we are required to consult their welfare, by

* It is far from the intention of the author to decide the question, whether the faith of these states is plighted by treaty, for the restoration of those disappointed people, who are commonly called absentees, to the rights and privileges of citizenship. He leaves the decision of this question with those, who have better means of information, and more discernment, than he can pretend to. He doubts not, but his countrymen are disposed, in all cases, to preserve their national honour, inviolate. If *that* is not engaged or pledged, in behalf of those, who forsook us in our late contest, and chose the side of the enemy ; it must be determined by other considerations, whether they shall be restored, or not, to forfeited favour.

by methods that would encourage and promote their evil designs, and put us into such a situation, as to lie at their mercy. It is allowed by all, that a vindictive temper is inconsistent with the spirit and precepts of christianity. Whoever does any thing meerly for the sake of revenge, or in order to gratify his malevolent resentments, transgresses the christian law of benevolence. But a man may take such measures for his own security and defence, as shall operate to the disadvantage of his enemies, and at the same time preserve a christian temper. If by the conduct of enemies, we are unhappily reduced to this alternative, either to take such measures, as will involve them in trouble and distress ; or to suppress our love to ourselves, to our friends, and to society ; common sense will teach us on which side our obligation lies. In cases of competition, even private friendship ought to yield to the public good ; much more ought benevolence to an enemy to give way to the good of our country ; and to remain suspended, as to outward exercises, when the case is so circumstanced, that it cannot be thus exerted, without counteracting the interest of the community to which we belong. A regard to the public ought to swallow up every partial affection, inconsistent with the general interest.

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It is to the honour of America, that from the time we were first threatned with British tyranny, to the commencement of the late war; and from the commencement of the war, thro' all the stages and vicissitudes of it, to it's happy conclusion; she has produced an illustrious band of worthy patriots, who, unactuated by any unfriendly dispositions towards the rest of mankind, have, with unshaken firmness and fortitude, defended her cause, in the cabinet and in the field, by the pen and by the sword, against the arbitrary claims and hostile violence of her unnatural and cruel enemies. Inspired with the love of liberty, moved by the generous impulse of patriotic virtue, how many, quitting the calm enjoyments of domestic ease and tranquility, have magnanimously encountered and braved all the fatigues and dangers of war, and voluntarily sacrificed their lives for the support of *the cities of our God*, in the unabridged enjoyment of their religion and liberties! Time would fail me to give a catalogue of those worthies, who, unintimidated by the vaunting menaces and fulminating proclamations of British Rabbis, have nobly dared to espouse the cause of American liberty, and distinguished themselves by their heroic exertions; *not counting their lives dear, that they might save their*

their country. Their names are written on our hearts, as *with a pen of iron, and point of a diamond*; and will be consecrated to honourable remembrance, in the annals of America, till time shall be no more: while the name of every envious, sneering scoffer, calumnjator, and wicked conspirator, is either lost in oblivion, or doomed to perpetual infamy.

Some, it may be, whose frozen breasts have never yet been warmed with the generous flame of patriotic fire, in order to detract from the merit of the zealous assertors and defenders of the liberties of their country, will pretend there is no such thing as public virtue. But if there are any such contracted souls, who, without a blush, profess to have no social affections, of force enough to give them the least motion out of the narrow sphere of self, it may be best not to dispute feelings with them; but to allow them all that sordid selfishness which they claim, and not affront them by contradiction. But let us not sacrifice our own generous feelings, to their system. They have no more right to impose their feelings upon us, than we have to impose ours upon them.

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It must give pleasure to every true friend of human kind, to consider, that the late grand revolution, which has raised so great a part of America into a state of independence, was undertaken, and, by the assistance of divine providence, has been brought about ; not from ambitious views, or a fondness for dominion ; but upon principles friendly to the rights and liberties of every nation, upon the face of the whole earth. Unprompted by ambition to enlarge her territories by unjust conquests, or to compel any other states or kingdoms to submit to her usurped authority and government, America has contended only for the common rights of men. Her grand aim, her ultimate object in all her struggles and exertions, has been, not to prepare a yoke of bondage for the necks of others ; but to free herself and posterity from the tyranny of lawless arbitrary power (that source of plagues to the weak and defenceless part of mankind) and to secure those blessings, without which, the great ends of society, must be lost. With the most perfect cordiality, we have wished, and still wish, to cultivate friendship with all nations, on such a footing, as shall be to mutual advantage, and conduce to the general good of the whole world. In regard even to Britain, persuaded I am, that the inhabitants

inhabitants of these states (with very few exceptions) might safely appeal to the great Searcher of hearts, as a witness to their sincerity, should they declare, that though she has treated them in the most barbarous and provoking manner, and forced them in their own defence, to fly to arms, and engage in a long and bloody war; yet they never wished to see her deprived of freedom, or reduced to inglorious subjection to any power on earth. Though she has cut the knot of kindred-love, and effectually destroyed that predilection, which produced a special attachment to her, in preference to others, yet we are not so implacable and unforgiving, but that we can heartily wish her prosperity and happiness, in common with other nations.

The independence of these American states, being founded on such a broad basis of generous philanthropy, we have reason to hope they will still be the special care and charge of the gracious Parent of the universe, whose *tender mercies are over all his works*; and that, under his almighty patronage, they will become a permanent flourishing empire, supported by the principles of virtue, religion and liberty without licentiousness,

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Let me, on this occasion, with all the sensibility of lively joy, express my hearty congratulations, on the happy cessation of hostilities, after a most distressing, expensive and bloody war. Hail, auspicious happy day, that has put a stop to the effusion of human blood and the horrors of war, and sheathed the devouring sword ; that has crowned our virtuous efforts with glorious success, giving us established independence with the returning blessings of peace, and filling our mouths with songs of triumph ! Men, brethren and fathers, I felicitate you, I felicitate my country, on this great, this glorious event ; an event, which cannot but cause every patriotic heart to expand with joy, at the prospect of the bright scenes which it opens to view, after a long and gloomy night of sorrow and trouble.

What acknowledgments do we owe to the supreme Governor of the world ; who was pleased to hear our cries, in the days of our distress, and to give us persevering courage and fortitude in those trying times, when our affairs wore the gloomiest aspect ; when we were involved in awful scenes of havock, blood and carnage, and surrounded with the depredations and shocking ravages of a war, carried on against us with savage wantonness ;

wantonness; who was pleased to defend us, by his mighty power, when we were weak, unprepared and unequal to the conflict, and to enable us to make such a noble stand, and to gain such signal victories, while we were without ally, as gave us respectability abroad, and induced one of the first European powers, heartily to espouse our cause, and assist us by a generous and friendly alliance: who hath been our shield and protection, from the first rise of the war, through all the hazardous progress of it, and hath led forth our armies, under the conduct of a wise, brave and intrepid general, expert in war, of singular equanimity in success and disappointment, indued with a soul formed for noble achievements, whom he was pleased to raise up and qualify for the important command which has been committed to him, and to honour as a distinguished instrument of the emancipation of his country? *These are the Lord's doings, and they are marvellous in our eyes.*

When we look back on the difficulties and hazards in which we have been involved; when we consider what engines of mischief and destruction have been employed to work our ruin; when we reflect on the perils and dangers we were in, not only
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from the policy and power, the stratagems and violence of open and professed enemies, but from the insidious arts, treacheries and conspiracies of false and deceitful men among ourselves ; who, under the disguise of friendship or mask of neutrality, have constantly endeavoured to dishearten and discourage us, to obstruct our measures, retard our operations and disappoint our enterprizes, and, at the same time, secretly to aid the cause of those, who had unjustly compelled us, to make our appeal to Heaven, as our last resort : When we consider these things, what reason have we to adore the merciful providence of almighty God, who, by many signal interpositions in our favour, has finally baffled and defeated the mischievous machinations of all our enemies, both secret and open ; disconcerted the plans of those who unrighteously rose up against us, and obliged them (notwithstanding all their pride of power, and vain confidence of reducing us to unconditional submission) to yield the grand point contended for, by negotiating a peace with us, upon the footing of equality and independence ! With the greatest pertinency may we now adopt the language of the royal psalmist, and say, *If it had not been the Lord, who was on our side, when men rose up against us ; then*

then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul; then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us, as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

If we have wisdom to make a good improvement of this happy event, what blessings and felicities, that this world is capable of affording, may we not secure to ourselves and to our posterity? When we look forward, what glorious prospects open to view! How pleasant must it be to every sincere lover of his country, to entertain his fancy with future scenes, and behold, through the medium of probable conjecture, the future glory, grandeur and magnificence of America! To behold her raised superior to all her enemies; extending her friendly arms for the support and protection of other states and nations against the attacks of restless encroaching ambition; and (while none dare to distrust or affront her) offering a refuge and asylum, in her bosom, to the injured and oppressed of the human race in

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all quarters of the globe ! To behold wealth and opulence flowing in upon her, in continual streams, from the inexhaustible sources of agriculture, and a free trade and commerce with all nations ! To behold her spreading, by a rapid population, over those vast tracts of uncultivated land, which are now the haunts of wild beasts, and see the wilderness, by the hand of industry, changed into a fruitful field, blossoming as the rose, and yielding, in plentiful exuberance, every rural comfort and delight ! To behold her exalted to noble heights of improvement, in every useful art and science ; mounting on the strong pinions of virtue, learning, eloquence, religion, philosophy, and other sublime intellectual accomplishments, above Greece and Rome, in their zenith of glory !

These are agreeable prospects ; but whether America shall ever realize them, depends much upon the wisdom and virtue of the present generation. Every patriot, from the highest to the lowest order, has now an extensive field opened before him, for the display of his utmost abilities, in providing for the future peace and prosperity of his country. The consequences of our conduct at this opportunity, will affect, not ourselves only, but unborn millions.

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Every consideration proper to influence the human mind, obliges us to exert ourselves, to make sure of the blessings, which are now offered by the propitious hand of providence, and to transmit the same to succeeding generations. Should we neglect the means necessary for these purposes, the bright day, which now beams upon us, may soon be overcast with clouds; and our songs of triumph end in new scenes of sorrow and trouble.

The British troops are not yet removed. Their withdrawal, as soon as conveniency will permit, is necessary to give us full assurance that the reconciliation on the part of Britain, is sincere. Suspicion therefore should not sleep, until they are withdrawn. Prudence, wisdom, reason, require vigilance and caution, and oblige us to be on our guard.

Though the land now *rests from war*, and we daily expect to hear that the definitive treaty of peace is compleatly ratified, yet it would be exceedingly unsafe for people to lay by their arms, and neglect all military matters. Our country affords so many tempting objects to excite the ambition of other nations (especially of those, who can have easy access, by reason of a proximity of territory) that

that we can have no security of a lasting peace, or of enjoying long the blessings of freedom, if we should totally withdraw our attention from the arts of war, and be unprovided with the means of defence. Standing armies in a time of peace are indeed dangerous to liberty; but a well furnished and well disciplined militia is of great importance to a state, being necessary either to prevent a war, or to put people into a capacity to defend themselves against any invasion or attack from their enemies. The public welfare requires that our militia be kept on such a respectable footing, as shall render us secure at home, and formidable abroad. But leaving it to the wisdom of our rulers to determine what is best in reference to this matter, let me observe, that

The inhabitants of these states are under the most sacred obligations, not only to consult the happiness of the states, to which they respectively belong, by discountenancing all disorders, suppressing those vices, that are inconsistent with the interest of society, and giving encouragement and support to every virtue, upon which the peace, prosperity and stability of each state, separately considered, depend; but by endeavouring to strengthen those bands of union, which have
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connected the whole together, as one independent nation. By solemn confederacy and compact every one is bound, to keep the good of all the states in view, while he aims to promote the good of the particular state with which he is more immediately connected. In order to preserve the union between the states, and establish it upon a permanent basis, whatever is inconsistent with the principles, which, upon the maturest deliberation, have been adopted, as the grand cement of it, must be carefully avoided; and a proper attention be paid to the interest and welfare of the whole. The separate good of the several states, is to be pursued only by such measures, as shall harmonize with the good of all in the confederacy.

Nothing did more encourage Britain to undertake and protract the late war, than a presumption, that it would be impossible for states, so distant from one another; so different, in many respects, in their education and manners; and between which, from situation and other circumstances, there would often be an interference and competition of interest; to unite, or remain long united in one common cause. By mortifying experience she is now convinced of her mistake; having seen the union gather strength
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and confirmation, under the overruling hand of providence, from the very measures which she took, in hopes to break and destroy it. Chagrined at this disappointment of our enemies, it is possible there may be some among us, who having always been disaffected to our cause, and all along endeavoured to alarm people's minds with presages of divisions and dissensions between the states, may still wish and hope to promote such an event, lest their reputation for foresight should suffer ; as Jonah wished for the destruction of Nineveh, lest his prophetic abilities should be called in question. But should any be so inimical as to attempt any thing of this sort, by sowing discord ; fomenting animosities ; endeavouring to propagate unreasonable jealousies and suspicions, or to nourish and strengthen local prejudices ; it is hoped there is wisdom, virtue and resolution enough among the friends of the country, to defeat their evil designs, and (maugre the utmost efforts of every incendiary and mischief-maker) to preserve the union unbroken, and the confederacy uninterrupted and intire.

It is evidently of the greatest importance to these states, both conjunctly and separately considered, to keep the public faith, sacred
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and inviolate. This is a main pillar in the politic fabrick ; without which the building must soon fall. This is necessary to gain us honour and confidence among other nations, and to preserve peace and union among ourselves. Every one therefore is obliged to contribute his share towards fulfilling the engagements and promises, made by lawful authority, in behalf of all the states, or of the particular state to which he belongs; that all, whether countrymen or foreigners, who have afforded or shall afford any assistance or service to the public, may receive justly expected rewards ; and none have reason to complain, that they have been deceived and injured, by depending on public faith. Should any be disposed to violate their obligations, in this respect, the civil magistrate has undoubted authority, and ought to compel them to their duty ; for if every one might be left at liberty, to do *what is right in his own eyes*, public credit would stand upon a precarious foundation, and be continually liable to be sacrificed to the humour, caprice and avarice of individuals.

Though public credit has been in a declining state, yet we are glad there is an hopeful prospect of its recovery. What particular methods

methods are best for placing it on a firm and durable basis, I have not the vanity to think myself capable of determining. But it is conceived, no method can be adopted for this purpose, but what will require the aid of taxes, in some mode or other ; and consequently give umbrage to those (if any such there are) who never can be satisfied, unless they can enjoy the blessings of good government without cost. But he, who has just conceptions of things, cannot sure expect to enjoy the blessings of society, or suppose it possible to support the honour and credit of government, and attain the ends of it, without considerable expence, even in the most peaceable times ; much less, in times of danger, difficulty and general calamity.

It cannot be thought strange, that a distressing war, of eight years continuance, has involved us in a great debt. But considering the magnitude of the object, which we have had in pursuit, and the great exertions which we have been obliged to make in order to attain it, our debt is not so great, as might have been expected. Those nations, which are now groaning under the iron yoke of oppression, and despotic government, would think themselves happy, if they could purchase

purchase the invaluable blessings of liberty, at so cheap a rate. There is yet another consideration, which alone is sufficient to silence all complaints, on this head. It is this, that if we had been reunited to Britain, and in addition to other expences, had had a proportional share of her enormous debt laid upon us, it would have hung like a millstone about our necks, and plunged us into inevitable bankruptcy, from which we never could have recovered ourselves. Our present burden, tho' somewhat pressing, is comparatively light. Let prodigality, luxury, and other impoverishing vices be banished from among us ; and let frugality, œconomy and industry supply their place ; and then considering our means and resources, it will not be so difficult to discharge our debt, in the course of a few years, as some may imagine. And while the legislature, in levying taxes, for this and other important purposes, take all possible care to make the burden as light as the public exigences will permit, and to adjust each man's share of the public expence to his interest and circumstances, every one, instead of indulging a murmuring temper, should chearfully endeavour to defray his part, rejoicing that such wise provision is made for *judgment to run down as waters,* and *righteousness as a mighty stream.*

Convinced of the necessity of a strict regard to justice, for preserving the credit of government, and mutual confidence between the members of a community, every true friend to society will wish and endeavour to promote it, in all orders of men, from the highest to the lowest. It is an observation of a king, as much celebrated for his wisdom as magnificence, and may be laid down as a maxim, confirmed by the experience of all ages, that *righteousness exalteth a nation*. According to the natural course of things, and common order of providence, that society has the fairest prospect of prosperity, and lasting felicity, where government, first founded in equity, is administered according to the rules of impartial justice; and where truth, honesty and fidelity are encouraged, maintained and promoted between man and man, in their private intercourse and transactions. In this case, peace and harmony will prevail among the members of a society; who will consequently be in a suitable disposition to serve one another, and to unite in such measures, as the general interest shall, at any time, require. But when the opposite vices predominate; when faith and truth, uprightness and integrity take their flight; when justice is made a matter of traffick, and is bought and sold for money; when
deceit,

deceit, falshood, unrighteousness and oppression bear sway without controul; then disorder and confusion, schism, tumult and misery, may be expected as a natural consequence and effect.

Though unrighteousness may sometimes answer a present purpose; yet follow it a little way, in it's consequences, and it will be found to be the parent of difficulty and trouble, of embarrassment and perplexity. There can be no danger or hazard in adhering to the rules of justice; but what is morally wrong can never be good policy, in reference either to public or private affairs.

There is nothing more manifest, than that the interest of a people is greatly affected, by the virtues and vices prevalent among them. From hence the inference is obvious, that the morals of a people are among the great objects, which claim the particular attention of the legislature and civil authority. It evidently falls within their province, to provide means, by law, for the suppression of vice and wickedness, and the promotion of good morals. In order effectually to answer these ends, care should be taken for the diffusion of learning and religion through a society; that people may entertain just
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conceptions of the dignity and rights of human nature, and be early initiated in the principles of a sober, honest and pious life. The general prevalence of ignorance and irreligion must be productive of very mischievous effects in society. For ignorant minds, unimpressed with a sense of a Deity, of a providence and a future state, must be unprincipled, and prepared, whenever occasions offer, for the most atrocious crimes. I would just add, that an ignorant people, are continually liable to be imposed upon, and seduced into a surrender of their liberties, by the specious arts, eloquence and address of designing men, whose enterprising ambition will not fail to lay hold on such an advantage, for the acquisition of power.

Sensible of how great importance it is to the happiness of a people, to be early instructed in the principles of piety and virtue, and furnished with good degrees of knowledge, respecting the things of this world and that to come, our worthy ancestors were induced to take effectual care for the encouragement and support of the liberal arts and sciences; for the preservation of a reverential sense of a Deity on people's minds; for the instruction of all in religion and good literature.

literature. Great and invaluable are the blessings, that have been derived to us, their posterity; from their pious care, in these respects; a consideration whereof should provoke us to imitation; that as we have reason to honour their memory, for the excellent provision they made for our happiness and welfare, so our descendents may have equal reason to *rise up and call us blessed.*

Our new constitution, while it has provided every guard, which human wisdom can invent, to defend our liberties, civil and religious, against every encroachment of arbitrary power, has authorized our civil rulers to take care of the morals of people, by furnishing them with the means of instruction in virtue, piety and every branch of useful knowledge. They will therefore consider themselves as obliged to adopt suitable measures for the encouragement of literature, the advancement of the sciences, and the preservation of a sense of religion among all orders of men.

To say nothing of other literary institutions, which claim the patronage of our political fathers, and of all the friends of science; let me observe, that the laws providing for the establishment of schools, in
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our several towns and plantations, are wisely calculated to promote the great ends of society, by affording to all, the necessary means of education and instruction in the most important, useful and profitable branches of learning. But of what service or significance are the best laws, while they lie dormant, and may be transgressed with impunity? A law unexecuted is without life; and can answer no end, but to bring civil authority into disrepute.

As to laws obliging people to assemble for public worship, and provide themselves with public teachers of religion; such laws are evidently well adapted to promote the good order of civil government, and advance the happiness of a people, by enforcing the use of proper means for impressing men's minds with an awe of the supreme Governor of the world, and engaging them from a sense of their accountableness to him, to fulfil all moral obligation, and live in the practice of the virtues of a good life. And it is conceived that such laws can be no reasonable ground of complaint, so long as the sacred rights of conscience are sufficiently guarded and secured, by leaving people at liberty to chuse their own teachers, and modes of worship; and while none are subjected to
fines,

finer, forfeitures or any disadvantages of a civil nature, for their particular religious sentiments and profession, if they be peaceable members of society, and do not propagate any doctrines, inconsistent with the safety of the state.

To carry the idea of religious liberty so far, as to make it an effectual hindrance to the providing and using necessary means, for the preservation of a sense of religion and moral obligation among the members of a community, is to oppose it to the interests of human society, and to rob civil government of one of it's main supports. For the most powerful enforcements of obedience to civil authority, are derived from a consideration and belief, that there is a supreme invisible Power, presiding over the world, to whom all men are accountable, and who will reward or punish every man, in a future state, *according to his works*. Obedience that proceeds wholly from fear of punishment from men, is precarious and uncertain ; and will be withdrawn, upon the slightest temptations of pleasure or profit, whenever a person believes, that he can escape with impunity. Religion therefore forms a more steady and permanent principle of obedience to civil government, than
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any penal sanctions, of a temporary nature, by which the laws of men can be enforced.

It would evidently conduce greatly to the happiness and tranquility of society, and facilitate the administration of government and public justice, could people, in general, be persuaded to submit to the authority of the community, vested in it's rulers, and to obey the laws, *not only for wrath, but for conscience sake.* It is not conceivable how any society should enjoy this advantage, where the public worship of God is neglected, and no proper means made use of, for the instruction of people in piety, religion and morality.

The design of the institution of civil government being the good of the people, they who are intrusted with the management of it, should make this the grand object of their attention and pursuit, and in the exercise of their constitutional powers, use all means and methods, that are of manifest importance and necessity to answer this end. This will make them a *terror to evil doers*, and an encouragement to them who do well. This will not only command a general reverence; but insure to them the particular esteem, assistance and support of every

every true friend to the commonwealth ; and cause the censures and calumnies of the envious, malicious and factious, to recoil on their own heads. This will make them public blessings and benefactors ; and give them those sincere delights and supporting consolations, which arise from reflections on such good and useful actions, as have greatly contributed to the general interest and prosperity, and advanced the happiness of society.

It might be tho't an inexcusable omission, should I close this discourse, without paying a particular honourable attention to the worthy gentlemen, who have lately been vested with the sovereign powers of this commonwealth. Their promotion to such high stations of authority, by the suffrages of a free people, gives them respectability, and entitles them to our confidence.

It affords us singular pleasure, that the highest seat in government, is filled, the fourth time, with a generous, uniform, persevering and resolute patriot ; who has acquitted himself with integrity and honour, in the several important departments, in which he has been employed, since the beginning of our late contests. Nor shall we forget, that for the early decided and distinguishing part, which he took, in the cause

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of his country, he had the honour to be marked out, in conjunction with an eminent compatriot, for the first victim of British vengeance. Our satisfaction on account of his being again chosen first magistrate of this commonwealth, would be without alloy, on this occasion, was he not prevented, by sickness, from honouring the solemnities of the day with his presence.

We are happy to find, that the second rank in government, by the voice of the people, is again conferred on a gentleman, who, by an unwearied inflexible attachment to the cause of America, through all the hazzardous scenes of the late war, from first to last, has given full proof of his patriotism, and justly merited public respect and honour.

We rejoice that so many other worthy characters, that have approved themselves fast friends to their country, in the most perilous times, are intrusted with a share in the administration of government, and the important powers of legislation.

The testimony, which his Excellency ; his Honor, the lieutenant-governor ; and the honorable gentlemen, that compose the two branches of the general court, have received ; and which the council, still to be chosen, will

will receive, of the esteem and confidence of the people, by their election to such high offices ; must be an encouragement and animating motive to them, to improve the advantages resulting from their exalted stations, for the good of the public, the end of their advancement. We know that their business must be peculiarly difficult and arduous, at such a day as this. Until the body politic shall be cured of those distempers and disorders, which have been introduced by the convulsions of war, it will require great strength and fortitude of mind, to hold the reins, and sustain the burden of government. Great skill and wisdom, great firmness and resolution tempered with prudence, are necessary, at the present crisis ; to retrieve public credit ; to do equal justice to all ; to quiet the agitations of people's minds ; to put the affairs of the public into a proper train and arrangement ; to repair the disorders of the political machine, and adjust the wheels and springs of it, in such a manner, that every part may answer its end, and contribute to the beauty, order and usefulness of the whole. We therefore most heartily commend our civil fathers to the blessing of that God, *who giveth wisdom to the wise, and understanding to the prudent.* May the legislature, and all in authority, from the first magistrate

magistrate to the lowest officer, be endued with wisdom and armed with prowess, suitable to their stations, and be public blessings.

And let all people, of every class and denomination, seriously consider, how much it behoves them to submit to those, who are in authority over them, and to conform to the constitution and laws of the commonwealth, in order effectually to secure the blessings of civil government. While civil rulers are to be cautioned against an abuse of authority, and exhorted to employ their powers for the good of the public; people are to be put in mind to honour and obey magistrates; to be subject unto the higher powers, and to submit themselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake.

When people give way to a refractory temper; set themselves up in opposition to government; and by continual groundless invectives, endeavour to bring an odium upon their rulers, and upon all public measures; they take a direct method to overthrow all civil authority, and to disband and abolish society. Let people be vigilant and guarded against the encroachments of arbitrary power; but let them, at the same time, take heed, that they deprive not themselves of the blessings of good government, and plunge

plunge themselves into all the disorders, mischiefs, of anarchy, in order to secure themselves against tyranny. This would be as preposterous, as for a mariner to suffer voluntary shipwreck upon the rocks of Scilly, in order to avoid the dangers of Charybdis. No wise man will run into one extreme, in order to avoid its opposite, while he can steer safely, in a middle course, between both.

Sensible of the importance of good government, the true friends of society will cheerfully submit to lawful authority, and endeavour to encourage and support those, who are in public stations, in the execution of their high offices, for the public good. And while they do thus, they will cultivate in themselves and others, those benevolent dispositions, and those principles of integrity, honesty and justice, which are necessary to preserve peace and amity, good humour, order and mutual confidence among neighbours, and to lay a foundation for those private friendships, which afford some of the most refined social pleasures and delights.

And let it be remembered, that by the virtues of a good life, added to their religious devotions and acts of homage and worship, the people put themselves under the protection and patronage, and secure the
friendship

friendship of that almighty Being, whose providence governs the world ; whose voice all nature obeys ; to whose controul all second causes and subordinate agents are subject ; and whose sole prerogative it is to dispense blessings or calamities, as to his wisdom seems best. A people under the smiles of Heaven must be prosperous and happy. *If God be for us, who can be against us ?*

What happiness might we enjoy, as a people, and as individuals, if every one would reform his vices ; cultivate a meek, peaceable and benevolent spirit ; and use his best endeavours to promote the good of others, as well as his own ? What blessings might we procure to ourselves and to the community, if with one heart and one soul, we would apply ourselves to the duties, that we owe to one another, as brethren and fellow-citizens, and make it our business to fulfil all moral, social and civil obligations ? By thus doing, at the same time that we should brighten our prospects into the future world, and, through the merits of our most merciful Redeemer, provide for immortal blessedness in another state of existence, we might also secure to ourselves all the blessings of society on earth, and change this world into a sort of paradise.

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We have therefore every inducement suitable to work upon us as rational creatures, to engage us to conform to the rules of virtue, and comply with the great and comprehensive law of subjection to one another. Let us lay our minds open to the sacred influence of such mighty motives, that we may be happy in our connections, both public and private, in this world; and in the world to come, be admitted to the society of those blessed beings, who, knit together by the indissoluble ties of the most sincere and ardent love, have happy and uninterrupted experience of the most pure, perfect and sublime pleasures of friendship, for ever and ever.

May the benevolent Parent and Supreme Ruler of the universe bestow his benediction on us; unite our hearts in love to one another, and in the love of virtue; and dispose us to *keep all his commandments always*; that, the scenes of our troubles closed, we may see good days; rejoice in the happy effects of his favour to us, and in the promising prospects of the blessedness and prosperity of our descendents, to the latest generation.

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